

## **MINUTES**

### **WISCONSIN INTEROPERABILITY COMMITTEE ON RADIO & TOWER SYSTEMS (WICORTS)**

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2003  
11:00AM – 3:00PM**

**Sponsor: Pierce County Sheriff's Dept.  
Location: Pierce County Office building  
Ellsworth, WI**

Pierce County Sheriff Everett Muhlhausen welcomed everyone to Ellsworth and commented on interoperability and the need to look into the future and set standards for interoperations. Due to Pierce County's location, it needs to talk to surrounding counties in Wisconsin and Minnesota and also on the waterways of the St Croix and Mississippi Rivers.

Glenn Unger presented information on WICORTS and on the Bureau of Communications in DOT.

John Verhyen talked on Interoperability Demands, Administration and the SIEC (State Interoperability Executive Committee). He also talked on how standards are necessary for a successful enterprise implementation.

The Department of Homeland Security grant gave the opportunity for the biggest city in each state to apply, and also one county. Both Oneida and Pierce counties were recommended to OJA. The Governor selected Pierce County to submit an application. This is a demo grant; implementation has to be documented, as well as the successes and failures. The federal government will be learning how these projects work right along with the entities that receive the grants. That is why this is called a "demo" grant.

#### **Group Discussion and Comments**

Gary Dikkers, from DOT Bureau of Aeronautics commented that exempting public safety towers from tower zoning could compromise airspace near airports. Wisconsin has billions of dollars invested in these Airports. David Hewitt noted that statutory language BOC had proposed in the past would not exempt public safety towers from FCC and FAA rules which protect airspace around airports, but would exempt them from additional county and local zoning. The unpredictable delay due to zoning in construction of towers for public safety communications is one of the greatest risk/cost factors in any large-scale implementation. However, this type of statutory exemption is unlikely unless there is support from county and local public safety agencies.

Mike Knoll was asked what kind of radio coverage the proposed communications system would have. Mike said it should get very good portable radio coverage. They would be building on what's already there and the portable coverage is good right now.

Most agencies in the state are on highband. With the P25 standard in place, the Pierce Co. grant application was written to stay on highband. They felt it gave the biggest window of opportunity to keep working with their neighbors in the surrounding counties. And they could establish some mutual aid bases on 800 MHz for regional use.

Will neighboring counties not on the system still be able to talk to agencies on the new system? Mike Knoll answered yes. That is where preplanning comes in using a block of frequencies so you can talk when roaming outside the home territory. An agency could come off their trunking system and call on WISPERN.

There are multiple brands of radios that could accomplish what is needed. John Verhyen stated that it will be an open bid process.

Mike Kunesh was asked about Homeland Security funding. He said the money should fund 80 percent local agencies and 20 percent state agencies. He has not heard anything on the Pierce County grant application yet.

Is there a backup plan if Pierce County does not get the grant? Mike Knoll said they wanted to prepare a backup plan, but there was no time to get that in the grant.

Carl Guse, Wisconsin Frequency Coordinator, announced that due to the FCC narrowband deadline in January, WISPERN base or MARC repeater license applications should be filed ASAP. The WISPERN Board will be meeting on October 22, 2003.

Mike Kunesh announced that effective October 1, 2003, any entity applying for a federal grant would need to obtain a DUNS number. It is a Dun and Bradstreet number. The number to call is 1-866-705-5711, or you can obtain one on-line at [www.dunandbradstreet.com](http://www.dunandbradstreet.com). (or [www.dnb.com](http://www.dnb.com) will get you there too)

Mike Kunesh said in 2003, P25 is a federal "recommendation" not a requirement for Phase 1. OJA does not know yet what will be required for 2004. *(These recommendations are outlined in the attached Bulletin from OJA)*

John Verhyen said P25 is a TIA/EIA standard. If you look to the future you should get narrow banding and digital capability. It will put you in reasonably good shape.

The federal government in the past supplied mutual aid frequencies without much direction. There is a need to have plans and standards in place just to get everybody on the same page. Vendors could help with a trunking solution. We can get a lot accomplished if we all work together. Trunking for one agency alone is cost prohibitive.

Al Wohlfert talked about wideband vs narrowband. Use of narrowband is not impossible, but it doesn't work well. Radios transmitting on narrowband and receiving on wideband have low or poor audio. Vice versa, the sound is convoluted and over modulated. Mike Knoll tried with paging and it did not work. Dave Plezbert suggested it could work thru IP.

Mike Kunesh said they were given terrorism grant money and are expected to get the money out to agencies within 45 days. OJA has asked that the grant money Not be spent on portable radios until they have a statewide plan in place. A memo "Homeland Security Funding Bulletin #10" dated September 15, 2003 was sent to all EM directors from the Office of Justice Assistance (copy attached) to clarify their position on APCO Project 25 (Phase 1) compliant issues regarding purchase of communications equipment with the terrorism funds.

Mike Knoll talked about Wireless 9-1-1 Legislation. The 911 surcharge funding goes away after 3 years and a mechanism for funding the ongoing maintenance needs to be in place after that. Minnesota has given some real thought and research to funding ongoing costs of their 800 MHz communications system. The state put a surcharge on cell phone bills. This method should be given some consideration.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm.

Below is a list of items distributed at the meeting. If you wish to obtain a copy of any of these, please call Diane Miller at 608-267-9763, or email: [diane.miller@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:diane.miller@dot.state.wi.us).

*Pierce County Grant Application*

*Presentation on Strategies for Statewide Interoperability by John Verhyen*

*Memo from DOT to Governor's Task Force on Terrorism Preparedness on recommendation of SIEC, along with the Executive Order from State of Oregon on SIEC.*

*Washington Post article on "Wireless Growth Hinders Rescuers"*

# STATE OF WISCONSIN OFFICE OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE



JIM DOYLE, GOVERNOR

DAVID STEINGRABER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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## Homeland Security Funding Bulletin No. 10

September 15, 2003

### Communication Systems & Project 25 (APCO-25)

The policy of The Office of Justice Assistance regarding radio and communication equipment purchased using 2003 Homeland Security grant funds is that the equipment must be Project 25 - Phase 1 (APCO 25 –Phase 1) compatible and upgradeable to Phase 2 as detailed below

**This means that for the purposes of this grant the radios must be:**

- Forward and Backward compatible with other equipment
- Analog and Digital compatible
- Capable of operating both on conventional and trunked systems
- Programmable to wide band (25Kc) and mid-band (12 ½Kc)
- Powered by batteries that last at least 8 hours

**They must also be up-gradable in the future to enable:**

- Encryption
- Programming on the fly

The bulleted items above are not all inclusive of the required standards for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Project 25 Standard. We have also confirmed that radios that meet this standard are within a price range of \$1,500 to \$2,000. Many of the radios that are priced at \$3,000 and up are designed to the Phase 3 level of Project 25 and go beyond the current requirements. In addition, the requirement that radios must be *compatible* with the above standards means that the radios do not necessarily need to have all of the above capabilities at the time of purchase, yet they must be easily up-gradable at a later time. It is the responsibility of the grant recipient to ensure that any radio purchases meet this requirement. The purchase of any communication equipment that does not meet this requirement may result in the forfeiture of any grant funds received.

The Office of Justice Assistance has been working to resolve the problem of interoperability since the start of this grant program. It has consumed a tremendous amount of effort and time of the staff. We have done this to ensure that any decision that is made will be best for the entire state of Wisconsin as it relates to interoperability. OJA will begin working with a consultant on an interoperability study in the coming weeks and expects to have a plan in place by April 2004. Ideally, the purchase of any communications equipment would be delayed until the plan is complete. Grant recipients are strongly encouraged to delay their radio equipment purchases until 2004 and use 2003 Homeland Security funds for other equipment needs while the interoperability study is underway, however OJA recognizes that some local agencies have immediate critical need of this equipment. Therefore, OJA has conducted numerous discussions with communications experts in state agencies, vendors and independent experts to find a solution that will both meet the needs of local agencies and not compromise the future statewide interoperability plan. These recent discussions have confirmed that, until the statewide interoperability study is complete, the APCO Project 25 standard is the best way to meet these needs.

As OJA begins working on the interoperability study, we will continue to engage in discussions with experts in the field and will attempt to give additional guidance on this matter throughout the coming months. We hope that by working together we can help local agencies find communications equipment that is both affordable and meets our current and future interoperability needs.

More information is available at the OJA web site:

[http://oja.state.wi.us/asx/homeland\\_security.asp](http://oja.state.wi.us/asx/homeland_security.asp).

We encourage you to bookmark the site, as it will be an increasingly useful and a continuously updated resource for Homeland Security grant information.

Please direct your questions or concerns to the OJA point of contact:

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